

Board of Selectmen reviews First Selectman's budget
February 25, 2013

Present: First Selectman Gayle Weinstein; Selectman David Muller; Selectman Dennis Tracey III; Town Administrator Tom Landry; Administrative Assistant Judy DeVito; Finance Director Rick Darling; Department heads; residents and members of the press.

This meeting was recorded and videotaped. The tapes are available in the Selectmen's office.

Ms. Weinstein called the meeting to order at 7:30pm

Pledge of Allegiance-

Board of Selectmen review First Selectman's Budget- Ms. Weinstein did a Power Point presentation that is attached to the minutes.

Administration and Finance- In the salary line there is a wage contingency. Ms. Weinstein said that we haven't negotiated with the Unions yet for next year so she put in a general amount. She has moved the Town Engineer and the Administrative Assistant for Planning and Zoning from this budget to Land Use which is why there is a decrease of 19.5%. She also put one pot of money together for all the secretarial services.

General Administration- Commission for the Arts was reduced by \$1,000 from \$6,000 to \$5,000. She reduced Memorial Day and Veterans Affairs activities from \$3,800 to \$3,000. Unemployment is going up because she reduced Parks and Recreation grounds keeper so we have to make up for that in unemployment. We have savings in electricity. The reason for the decrease in cable television is Don Saltzman and Harvey Bellin were successful in getting more grants. The new thing in this budget is the introduction of a part-time tree warden. She put \$5,000 in the budget for this and she had been having conversation with Westport to see if we could share a person. She is anticipating a 9% increase in health insurance and have a 5% off set from this year, so she is budgeting for a 4% increase but we don't have the final rate yet.

Information Systems- The increase in contractual services is because we have to upgrade the Town Clerk software and there are some increases in contractual prices.

Elections and Registrars- Ms. Weinstein said the Registrars asked for \$1,000 increase because the job has increased. After discussion, it was increased by \$500 per registrar.

Assessor- The increase is for new motor vehicle pricing guides.

Tax Collection- She is recommending a decrease of 20% FTE for the Tax Collector and a decrease to the assistant from 39 weeks to 37 weeks. We can accomplish this and still have the tax office opened the same amount of time and eliminate some of the redundancy of having two people there at the same time. She changed the DMV expenses to \$2,468 to make it more accurate.

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Legal Counsel- As of November we have only spent \$58,000. We have settled all of our labor and employment issue but still have some pending tax appeals. She is asking for a 5% increase in the litigation expense as well as a 2% increase in the retainer expense.

Town Clerk- The only increase is for archival paper in the general supply line.

Land Use- Going forward they will be combining Planning and Zoning, Zoning Board of Appeals, Conservation Commission and the Building Department under one centralized Land Use department. Fred Anderson, Conservation Planning is retiring and they worked out an agreement with the Union to reduce the hours from 4 days a week to 3 days a week.

Volunteer Fire Department- Ms. Weinstein said rather than separating out item by item she has given them one pot of money. She is recommending that we increase their budget by 2%. It will be actually a 4% increase because we will be funding one of their requests for pagers through a capital closeout of funding that they have for their digital radios.

Mr. Tracey said he did not like the one pot of money approach. We should be paying for certain expenses and if we are not paying 100% of the expenses we should pay whatever we agree on. Ms. Weinstein said we can go back and break it up but we have always given the money as one line item. Mr. Tracey said he would like to see the actual to what has been budgeted for this year.

Fire Marshal-The State mandated that we put an open Burning Official in place. Ms. Weinstein said that every year Mr. Pokorny comes to her because he would like to do more fire education in the schools. She is proposing that we increase his hours from 19.5 to 25.

Animal Control-Mr. Harper had asked for a uniform, so she is proposing a uniform allowance this year for \$500. Mr. Harper is asking for a new van but we have changed the way we fund our vehicles and created a vehicle sinking fund. There is money in the fund if we have to buy a new van but she feels that we should try to drive them for as long as we can and keep them properly maintained.

Police Services-There was a request for an additional two police officers and an SRO. They wanted a 10th officer to help offset the issues they have with scheduling and the 11th officer would be for mile of safety during the school year and work as an officer the rest of the year. Ms. Weinstein said she wanted to honor the superintendent's original request which was not to budget for an SRO until the Board of Education has gone through their due process and determine if they want it. She is supportive of that and has no problem giving them a supplemental appropriation if they come back at a later date. She does not want to tax the taxpayers for that if we don't know if the Board of Education is going to want it.

Ms. Weinstein said that she did move some of their request for equipment to the Capital Budget. She reduced the cones and barriers by 1/2 of what they requested.

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Chief Troxell said he disagreed with not putting the SRO into the budget because the Board of Education is close to making a decision to endorse it. Ms. Gralnick said given the request from the Superintendent and making mile of safety from 7am to 4pm every day with a police presence on school road the eleventh officer would be a dedicated position. When school is not in session the 11th officer will be on patrol. Mr. Tracey said that they should come back to this after they have their security meeting with the schools so that we are letting the needs drive the budget and not the other way around.

Health District- They are asking for a 3% increase but the increase that we pay will be dependent on what Westport approves in their budget.

Youth Services-Ms. Weinstein asked the Selectmen to add an extra day for the Director to what she had originally proposed. Last year we cut the position from five days down to three days and she wants to increase it back up to four days. Michelle Albright said she has been meeting all of the teams at the schools, psychologist, and counselors and working to establish a closer connection with them. They have been referring cases to her and she has been working with them to identify needs of the community that they can't serve. Charlene Hillman has been giving her the families with kids and she has taking over primary point for them. Charlene is still handling the gas and fuel needs but Michelle is dealing more with the child and family services.

Ms. Weinstein said the increase of the one day would be an additional cost of \$14,266. If we increased her five hours the additional cost would be \$9,510. The selectmen supported the one day increase.

Senior Services- Wendy Petty has asked for additional hours for the Program Director Pam Wilson, as well as for the summer hours. Wendy said they are asking for an increase of \$3,937., which would be an additional 5 hours a week for her Program Director making the hours 19 hours per week for 43 weeks. During the summer it would take the summer part-time person from 4 weeks to 7 weeks. The reason is because of the increase in the Senior Center. They have gone from 2 rooms to 4 rooms as well as more than doubled their attendance at the senior center since Wendy started in August 2011. Both Mr. Muller and Mr. Tracey said they would be supportive of the increase. Members of the public spoke in favor of the increase.

Recreation Department Budget- Ms. Weinstein said we have a grounds keeper that is full time. She is proposing that he works full time 7 months of the year followed by a 5 month layoff. Additionally, the work load has decreased a lot because he is no longer responsible for anything on the school campus.

Eric Albert chairman on the Park and Recreation Board said they would like the First Selectman to reconsider from 7 months to 9 months. Dave Ungar said the 7 months sometimes cuts them short. Mid April to the end of October is the playing season but then the leaves come down. He would like to reconsider and have the grounds keeper from March through November. DPW said they would lend a hand with the leaves. Ms.

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Weinstein said this is the first she had heard about this request, and she would look into it further and the Board can discuss it at Wednesday's meeting.

Middle School Pool- Ms. Weinstein asked about the UV system and said she thought there would be a reduction in the chemical cost. Mr. Ungar said he couldn't make a reduction right now but the effect of the UV system has been dramatic.

Capital Budget- Ms. Weinstein said she did not fund the tennis court repairs because she felt that if they were in such dire need for repair, she would rather try to get them a supplemental appropriation or use the Capital close out funds to pay for it now, so they could get the repairs done before tennis season. They would discuss the Board of Education Capital at the Board of Education meeting tomorrow night.

At 10:25pm the meeting ended

Respectfully Submitted

Judy M. DeVito
Administrative Assistant
Approved 3/21/13